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Trump fans are flocking to the social media app Parler — its CEO is begging liberals to join them

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Ari Levy
@LEVYNEWS

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Republican politicians and conservative pundits have flocked to the app, in large part to protest what they say is unfair censorship by Twitter.

"If you can say it on the street of New York, you can say it on Parler," Matze said.



Parler CEO John Matze
EpochTimes

Jim Jordan, Elise Stefanik and [Nikki Haley](#) all have something in common, other than a strong affection towards President Trump.

The three Republican politicians joined social media app Parler this week, adding their profiles to a site that's emerged as the new digital stomping ground for anti-[Twitter](#) conservatives. Sen. [Ted Cruz](#) of Texas arrived earlier this month and Rep. Devin Nunes of California started in February, while Sen. [Rand Paul](#) of Kentucky has been a member since 2018, the year the app launched.

"It's about time y'all joined me on [@parler_app](#)," Paul tweeted on Wednesday. "What's taking the rest of you so long?!"

To be fair, Trump campaign manager Brad Parscale has also been on Parler since 2018.

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election campaign heats up. The Journal named Parler as a possible alternative.

Two days later, Parler was the top-ranked iPhone app in the news category, ahead of Twitter and Reddit, and 24th overall, just behind Venmo and WhatsApp, according to App Annie. User growth surged to 1.5 million from 1 million over the course of about a week, said [John Matze](#), Parler's 27-year-old founder and CEO.

"We're a community town square, an open town square, with no censorship," Matze said in an interview on Thursday, from his home in Las Vegas. "If you can say it on the street of New York, you can say it on Parler."

VIDEO 02:09

Twitter places public interest notice on Trump tweet for violating policy

Parler is playing into the hands of conservatives, who have become more vocal in their criticism of Twitter since the site started [flagging Trump's tweets](#) for promoting violence or abusive behavior or making false claims that could confuse voters. Trump supporters have long argued that the dominant Silicon Valley platforms have been out to censor conservative voices, even as those very same people continue to post on those sites and rack up followers by the thousands.

Rep. Jordan of Ohio told his 1.4 million Twitter followers on Friday to come over to Parler, where they "don't censor or shadow ban," referring to the practice of banning users in a way that's not apparent to them. By late afternoon he had about 3,100

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join him on Parler if they're "tired of left wing censorship of big tech." Nunes has an infamous relationship with Twitter, after [attempting to sue](#) the company for defamation and negligence and naming as defendants two anonymous parody accounts, "Devin Nunes' Mom" and "Devin Nunes' Cow."

"With Devin Nunes came a whole pack of haters," said Matze. He said that parody accounts are fine and even welcome, but Parler draws a line when it comes to spammers. "You can't spam people's comment sections with unrelated content," he said.

That's not the only no-no on Parler, which has a fairly thorough set of [community guidelines](#). The app doesn't allow terrorist organizations or support for terrorism, the sharing of false rumors, violent language (what the site describes as "fighting words") toward others, blackmail or pornography.

For verification, Parler awards a gold badge to public figures to distinguish them from parody accounts, which get a purple badge.

'Progressive bounty'

Matze, a computer scientist who founded the company in 2018, is grateful for the growth even if all the new verifications are creating a lot of extra work for his 30-person team.

But Matze doesn't want the app to be just an echo chamber for conservative voices. Personally, he says he doesn't like either political party and he wants to see more healthy debate. He's so intent on getting some liberals onto the platform that he's offering a \$20,000 "progressive bounty" for an openly liberal pundit with 50,000 followers on Twitter or Facebook to start a Parler account.

The company will judge the best one, based on engagement with the community, and pay that person the reward. Matze said there's been such little response that he increased the original proposed payment from \$10,000 to \$20,000.

"The whole company was never intended to be a pro-Trump thing," Matze said. "A lot of the audience is pro-Trump. I don't care. I'm not judging them either way."

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Brad Parscale, manager of U.S. President Donald Trump's re-election campaign, speaks during a rally for U.S. President Donald Trump in Des Moines, Iowa, U.S., on Thursday, Jan. 30, 2020.

Al Drago | Bloomberg | Getty Images

Where Matze is in full agreement with the Parler audience is in his opinion of Twitter. He thinks the company is targeting conservatives with censorship.

"I don't see why you need to censor the president's tweets," he said. "If you don't like what he has to say, vote him out of office."

Matze expects Parler to become a more attractive site for a more diverse audience over time because he sees Twitter continuing down a path of alienating right-wing voices, and "no one is going to want to stay on Twitter if the conservatives are gone."

But he recognizes that the political tone of his platform will probably make it hard for him to raise money from investors in Silicon Valley, which leans Democratic and is decidedly anti-Trump. Thus far, he's funded the company with angel money and said he'll soon be looking to raise a first institutional round of financing.

"I can only speculate that they wouldn't be interested unless they're ideological," he said, referring to traditional venture investors.

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These people are refusing to repay their student loans

His bigger challenge, and one that venture capitalists know well, is the difficulty in turning a big audience into a massive audience and turning that into a business. Few ad-supported companies have managed that feat. Matze said the site has a nascent ad business, but that revenue has not been a focus of the company. One model he's considering is a revenue share, so that users can monetize their own fanbase without all of the benefits going to the company.

There's much more to do first, though, on the product side. For example, sharing content isn't as easy as on other networks. If you share a post with a friend via a text message, the other person can't view it without being logged in. Matze says he's "fully intent on opening the platform" but user growth has gotten in the way of building it out.

For the Trump campaign, that appears to be a significant hurdle. Parscale, who has 159,000 followers on Parler, compared to almost 700,000 on Twitter, made a number of suggestions to the company last month, like recommending that it spend money to lure more media members and hire a designer.

With just a few months until the election and Trump sinking in the [polls](#), he's not hiding his ultimate goal.

"It must be buttoned up," he wrote on May 29. "I want to love it. I want to use it, I want to help. However, more than anything I want to win in November."

WATCH: [Trump to sign executive order aimed at cracking down on Facebook, Twitter](#)

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